

Ending Hunger by 2030

Everyone at the Table: Maine's Plan to End Hunger by 2030

Draft Strategic Plan

January 12, 2022



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COVER PAGE

Everyone at the Table

Maine's Plan to End Hunger by 2030

[logo?]

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From the Governor

[Letter from Gov. Mills]

From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Mainers,

I am pleased to present “Everyone at the Table: Maine’s Plan to End Hunger by 2030.”

This Plan was born out of the 129th Legislature’s LD 1159, authored by then-Rep. Craig Hickman and signed by Governor Mills. It results from over two years of collaborative work by and contributions from hundreds of individuals from both inside and outside of State government.

Four generous philanthropic funders—the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, the John T. Gorman Foundation, the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, and Hannaford Supermarkets—supported the research, the planning, and the dozens of community convenings that went into this document. And I want to offer my sincere thanks to the Legislature and the Governor for entrusting the Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry to facilitate the creation of this plan. While DACF is central to feeding Maine people—both through our support of agricultural producers and as part of the web of providers meeting the needs of Mainers living with food insecurity—we know that ending hunger in Maine will truly require that everyone be at the table.

My biggest thanks go to the hundreds of Maine people who committed their time, talent, and personal and professional experiences to make this plan a reality. In three phases of work (interrupted by a global pandemic), upwards of 200 Maine people brought clear eyes and open minds to wrestle with the rampant and corrosive presence of hunger in our state. These people included legislators, nonprofit and business leaders, educators, policy experts, and concerned Maine residents. Importantly, it included Mainers with lived and living experience of hunger who bravely shared intimate portraits of hunger as it’s faced each day and who shined an invaluable light on the solutions that can end this ongoing yet preventable emergency.

In a very real sense, DACF has merely been the steward of this plan. It comes from and belongs to the people of Maine.

While the effort to create this plan was significant, it is just the first step in this process. The work that remains requires continued commitment, compassion, and courage. The Department looks forward to taking this journey with you.

Sincerely,

Amanda E. Beal

Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry

VISION

We envision a Maine free from hunger which we have defined as eradicating **very low food security** (a.k.a. hunger) and achieving a rate of only **4% low food security**.¹

Ending hunger is our North Star, guiding a collective commitment to creating a state that offers all its people a stable foundation on which to build a good quality of life.

In hunger-free communities, everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive. No one experiences the impossible trade-offs that result in food insecurity -- trade-offs like skipping meals to pay for housing, medicine, or heat, or staying in an unsafe relationship because leaving jeopardizes one's ability to keep food on the table for one's children. Ending hunger interrupts generational cycles of harm caused by inequity and opens doors to opportunity and prosperity for the people, families, and communities of Maine.

[Graphic 1]

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE → The Outcomes



*For more on outcomes, see Appendix 3:
Recommended Metrics for an Accountability & Impact Dashboard

¹ [Definition and ranges of household food security, USDA ERS](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: EVERYONE AT THE TABLE - A ROADMAP FOR ENDING HUNGER IN MAINE

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE → Strategy



STRATEGIC GOALS:

A

Build the infrastructure and capacity necessary within and outside state government to coordinate the implementation of the Ending Hunger by 2030 Plan.

B

Ensure consistent, easy access to healthy, culturally appropriate food

D

Change the narrative of food insecurity to focus on collective responsibility and center the voices of impacted people

C

Promote, bolster and ensure economic security and opportunity

E

Close the equity gap in household food security by addressing underlying structural inequities in all Ending Hunger 2030 goals

“Hunger is not caused by a scarcity of food but a scarcity of democracy.”—Frances Moore Lappé

Maine’s Plan to End Hunger by 2030 aims at the root causes of hunger and food insecurity in our state. This approach was indicated in the authorizing legislation, 2019’s “Resolve to End Hunger in Maine by 2030” ([LD 1159](#)), and explicitly endorsed in the unanimously accepted “Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030” Report to the 129th Legislature (a.k.a., the [Interim Report](#)).

The development of this plan spanned 28 months and engaged more than 200 people across the state, including people with lived experience of food insecurity, emergency food providers, non-profit organizations, legislators, representatives from numerous State Departments and the Governor’s Office, and more. (To learn more about the development process, see Appendix A.)

To understand this plan and its recommendations, it’s critical to grasp a seeming paradox: food security in Maine has little to do with food. Or, more accurately, the causes of food insecurity have little to do with a scarcity of food. Food insecurity is most often a function of economic insecurity; hunger is a symptom of poverty.

This plan recognizes the critical role that food and food distribution play in responding to hunger in our communities today. There is no doubt that community-level solutions like compassionate, user-centered

charitable food initiatives; programs that empower people to grow their own food; and more are enriching the lives of Maine people in untold ways. That said, the aim of this plan ultimately is to *end* hunger, and to do so by adding to our approach root causes strategies that prevent the problem from happening in the first place. That’s why the plan’s overwhelming focus is on income and resources—and the forces that hold income and resource inequality in place. For those who pick up this plan and ask, “What do affordable childcare or the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan have to do with hunger?” The answer is, “Everything.” When we create a robust and equitable economy for those who can work, and a user-centered and adequate social safety net for everyone, we will end hunger.

This plan leverages expertise from across State government. Contributing Departments include Education; Economic and Community Development; Health and Human Service; Transportation; Labor; the Office of the State Economist; and The Governor’s Office on Policy, Innovation, and the Future. These policymakers were joined by a broad swath of legislators, nonprofit and business leaders, educators, policy experts, and concerned Maine residents. Importantly, contributors included Mainers with lived and living experience of hunger. This Maine-based expertise was deepened by research into best practices and success stories from anti-hunger work in other communities and around the globe. The result is a plan rooted in:

- evidence-based solutions to hunger,
- the unique nature of the problem in Maine, and
- the priorities of Maine people.

It’s clear why Maine’s Legislature and Governor were moved in 2019 to make ending hunger the State’s objective.

First, hunger and food insecurity are a lethal if often invisible epidemic. When most recently measured, one-in-eight Mainers and one-in-five Maine children were hungry or at risk for hunger. That is a breathtaking level of suffering: it means that each day thousands of children show up to school too hungry to learn, thousands of workers are too economically insecure to thrive, and thousands of Maine people are contending with entirely preventable ill-health. Were the State to continue to choose not to tackle hunger, we would be hobbling every community in our state.

Second, hunger’s human toll has an economic impact Maine can ill afford. Each year we incur \$709 million in hunger-related costs from lost productivity, increased need for special education services, preventable health conditions, and more. That’s on top of the \$370 million spent on feeding people.² If we allocated resources to end hunger rather than to treat it, we estimate we would need far less than the \$1 billion currently being spent—directly and indirectly—and we’d create more flourishing and joyful communities in the process.

² [Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030 Interim Report to the Legislature](#), 2020

Third, the problem of hunger is solvable. It is true that poverty and hunger are persistent, multifaceted challenges. History and recent events, however, suggest that ***we know what works*** to end them. In 2020, for example, we endured the most significant economic contraction since the Great Depression. Nevertheless, poverty and food insecurity fell measurably against this catastrophic backdrop. They fell because government chose to do simple things—like prepaying the Child Tax Credit and expanding SNAP benefits—that kept millions of Americans and thousands of Mainers from going without. If we can do that in times of economic calamity, imagine what we can do in times of relative prosperity—should we choose to.

Maine’s Plan to End Hunger by 2030 proposes two overlapping strategy areas that can be summed up as follows:

- Strengthen our response to food insecurity today.
- Prevent food insecurity tomorrow.

In addition, the plan names three cross-cutting goals that define priorities for how that work gets done:

- Build the capacity needed to implement the plan.
- Reframe our narratives around hunger and poverty to call out that structural forces, not individual behaviors, create most poverty.
- Prioritize equity every step of the way.

To strengthen our response *today*, we must improve the accessibility and impact of public and nonprofit food assistance; burdensome systems contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty. To prevent food insecurity *tomorrow*, we must address the economic and cultural conditions which hold the problem in place.

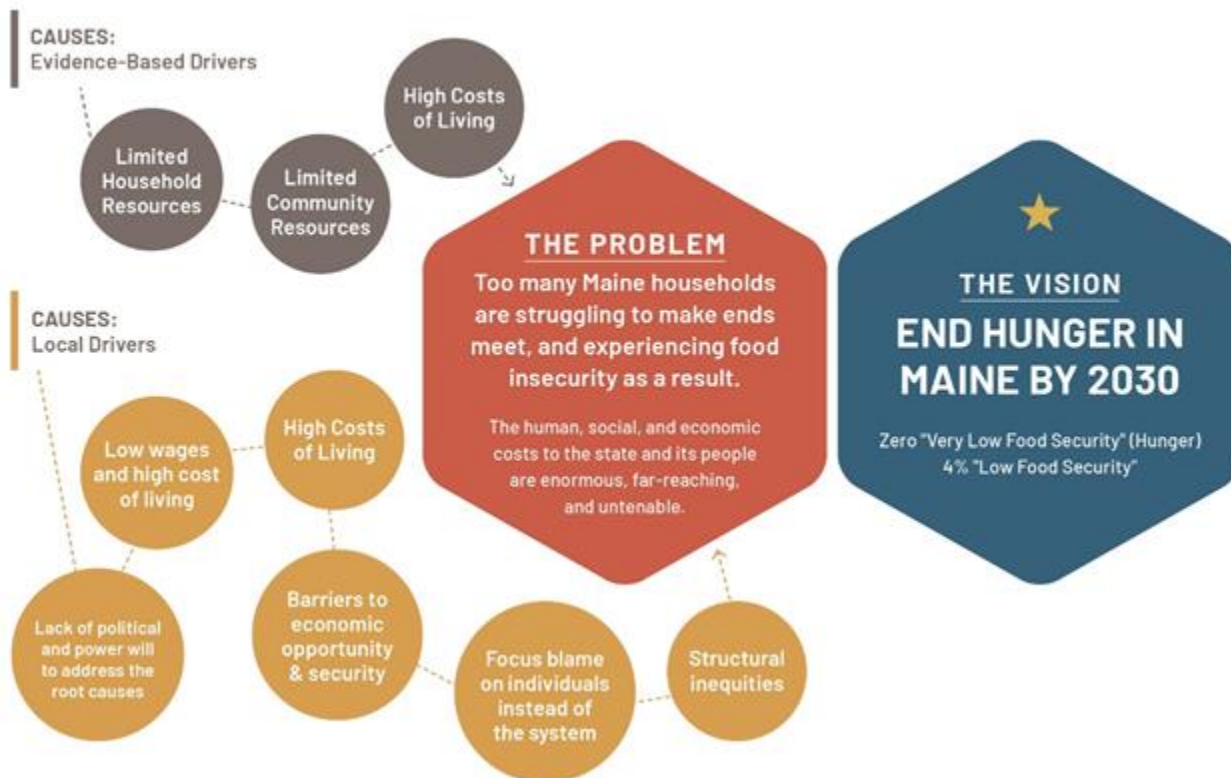
Some of this work is underway. The Department of Education has implemented free meals for every Maine Student, the Department of Health and Human Services is exploring options for making accessing programs more integrated and user-centered, and the Department of Transportation is launching pilots that provide reliable transportation to low-income job seekers and workers—to name just a few examples.

That said, much work remains—and everyone has a role to play in implementing this plan. This bold vision requires ongoing collaboration, investment, and innovation across sectors and across experience. The making of this plan mobilized deep expertise and high levels of engagement. The willingness of plan contributors and many other Mainers to commit to the goals articulated within signals that the opportunity to truly End Hunger by 2030 is very well within reach.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

[Graphic 2: The Problem & The Vision; The Strategy; The Outcomes]

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE → The Problem / The Vision



*For more on outcomes, see Appendix 3: Recommended Metrics for an Accountability & Impact Dashboard

FOOD INSECURITY IN MAINE: IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN FOOD

[Graphic 3: Food Insecurity Definition & Range]



Food insecurity is a crisis in Maine, impacting 11.4% of households in the state,³ or over 153,000 people a year (USDA, 2021). That’s roughly equivalent to the combined populations of Maine’s four largest cities. The problem is even more pervasive among Maine’s children, of whom almost one in five, or 18.1%, are impacted.⁴ These numbers represent people living, working, growing up, and growing old in every community in Maine.

Although the problem is widespread, dramatic disparities exist. Food insecurity rates are two to four times higher in certain communities or among certain demographics, including African immigrants (food insecurity: 51.6%), single-parent households (42%), people with a disability that prevents them from working (39%),⁵ and all People of Color (28.3%).⁶ There are also significant geographic and occupational differences. (more details on p. X - Equity)

Food Insecurity in Maine is More Common, More Severe, and Happens at Higher Incomes Than Elsewhere in New England and the U.S.

Maine has been an outlier, nationally and regionally, with above-average rates of household food insecurity every year since 2005.⁷ Even as the national food insecurity rate recovered following the 2008 recession, the problem in Maine grew worse, reaching a high of 16.4% for 2014-2016. Since at least

³ [Household Food Security in the United States in 2020](#), USDA

⁴ Gundersen, C., Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2021). Map the Meal Gap 2021: An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2019. Feeding America.

⁵ Myall, J. 2019. [Issue Brief: Food Insecurity in Maine](#). (MECEP).

⁶ [Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030 Interim Report to the Legislature](#), 2020

⁷ [Household Food Security in the United States, USDA ERS](#), Annual Report, 2005-2019

2005 Maine has had the highest rate of food insecurity in New England, a region otherwise notable for its low food insecurity.

This outlier status reflects the unique nature and scale of economic hardship in our state where food insecurity is more severe and happens at higher income levels than it does regionally and nationally. Maine had the second-highest rate of very low food security (a.k.a., hunger--the most severe level of the problem) in the nation in 2017-2019, representing over half of all food-insecure households – a share far above the national average (USDA).



Among food-insecure Mainers, 43% have incomes higher than the eligibility threshold for SNAP and WIC, our most effective anti-hunger programs. The situation of struggling with food insecurity yet being ineligible for anti-hunger programs is notably more rampant in Maine than it is nationally, signaling that **the way poverty is defined and calculated is particularly ill-suited for capturing the economic realities and living costs in Maine.**

Maine families who struggle financially and yet are ineligible for safety net access are severely disadvantaged by our state's low wages and a high cost of living. At the same time, those who *do* income-qualify for safety net programs are often derailed by "benefits cliffs"—the phenomenon of modest income gains triggering disproportionately larger losses in benefits. We see this, for example, when an additional \$100 of monthly income precipitates the loss of \$600 in monthly benefits. This dynamic, distressingly common, can create disincentives for career growth and barriers to financial stability, thus keeping food security out of reach.⁸

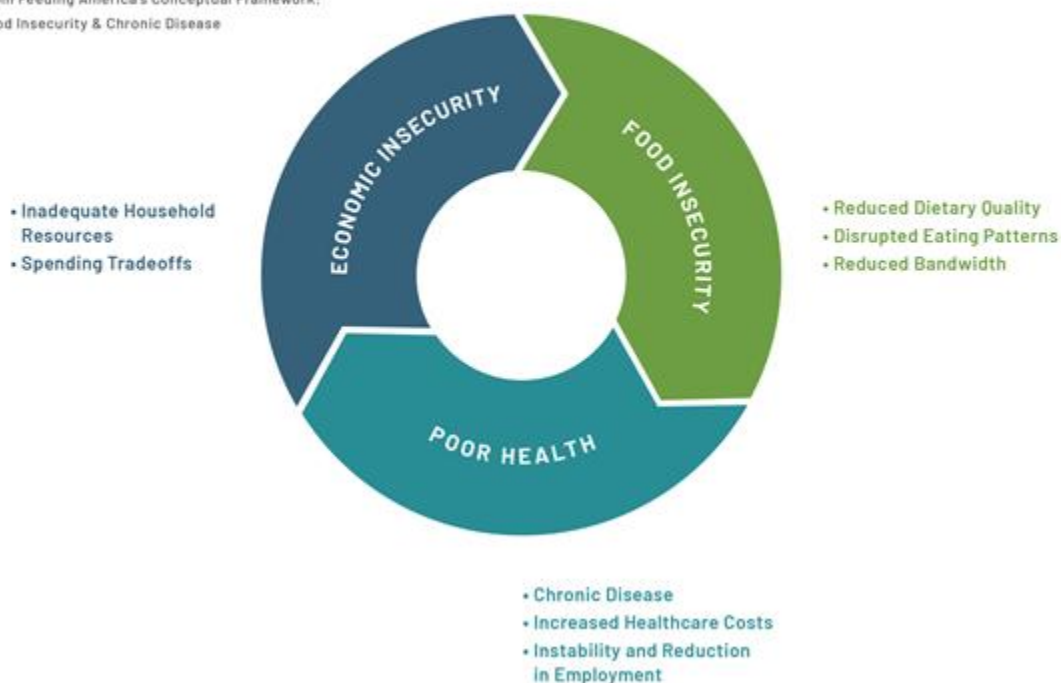
⁸ Maine's Department of Economic and Community Development has announced plans to offer for Mainers a benefits cliff calculator developed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. While the calculator itself doesn't alter policies that create cliffs, where piloted it has proven a powerful tool to help families make informed decisions and avoid benefits cliffs until policy reforms can be implemented.

[Graphic 4: The Primary Causes of Food Insecurity & The Cycle of Economic Insecurity, Food Insecurity, & Poor Health]

FOOD INSECURITY IN MAINE

The Cycle of Economic Insecurity, Food Insecurity & Poor Health

Adapted from Feeding America's Conceptual Framework:
Cycle of Food Insecurity & Chronic Disease



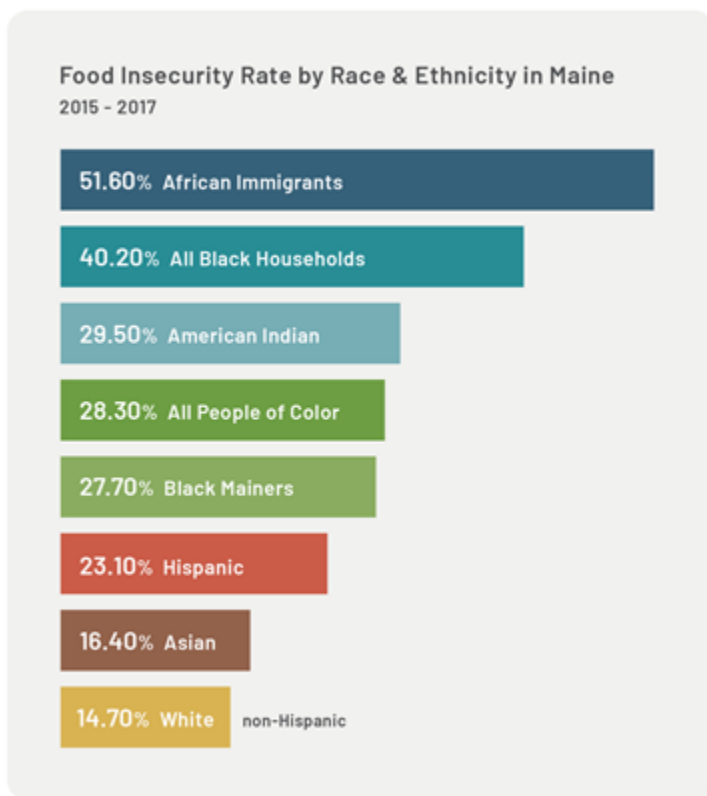
The Primary Drivers of Household Food Insecurity

Limited Household Resources Conditions that most strongly impact food insecurity are those that directly affect access to money and other assets.	High Costs of Living & Limited Community Resources Local context can exacerbate already strained household resources with high costs and limited community resources.
Low Wages, Inconsistent Employment, & Unemployment	High Housing Costs (With a high housing cost burden, food budgets are often among the first expenses to be cut.)
Income Shocks (e.g., job loss, a health emergency, foreclosure, or loss of stable housing, etc.)	High Energy Costs (e.g., heating & electricity)
Lower Assets (e.g., homeownership and savings)	High Costs of Food (strains budgets, can reduce effectiveness of SNAP)
Renting and Frequent Relocation (due to limited resources and a lack of affordable housing)	Limited or No Access to Transportation
	Living in an Under-Resourced, Low-Income Neighborhood
	High Healthcare Costs & Poor Health (can cause income shocks, affect employment)

Informed by: Engelhard, E. & M. Hake (2020). *Food Security Evidence Review: Key Drivers and What Works To Improve Food Security*. Available from Feeding America.

THE EQUITY GAP IN HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN MAINE

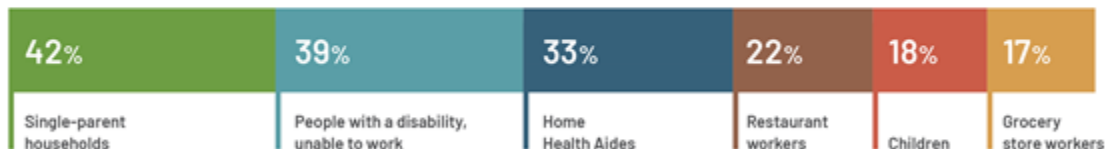
[Graphic 5: Food Insecurity Rate by Race & Ethnicity in Maine 2015-2017]



[Graphic 6: Additional Groups Impacted Severely by Food Insecurity in Maine]

THE EQUITY GAP IN HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN MAINE

Groups Impacted Severely by Food Insecurity in Maine



Food insecurity measures show us *how many* households are struggling to make ends meet and *which* communities are impacted most severely and most disproportionately.

Addressing disparities is a priority embedded in the legislative roots of Maine's Plan to End Hunger by 2030. LD 1159 called explicitly for a plan which would identify and close equity gaps on the road towards

eradicating hunger in the state. That work began with the [EH2030 Interim Report](#) which disaggregated data and found that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Maine are experiencing food insecurity at a rate two to nearly four times higher than the state average.⁹

The connection between household characteristics and increased risk and experience of food insecurity reflect underlying inequalities, like structural racism, which cause economic and social disadvantages. Racial disparities in Maine permeate those metrics that research has identified as the key drivers of food insecurity:¹⁰ economic security, education, health access, homeownership, and involvement with the criminal justice system.¹¹

Immigrants in Maine face particular barriers to employment and economic security, like having unrecognized foreign professional credentials, ineligibility for public benefits, and lack of culturally-responsive services, which can be exacerbated by racial discrimination.

Single-parent households are also among the groups experiencing the highest rates of food insecurity in the state at an estimated 42 percent. Food insecurity is predictably high among low-wage workers, affecting, for instance, one in three home health aides and around one in five grocery store and restaurant workers. For Mainers whose disability prevents them from working, 39 percent are food insecure; a rate more than three times higher than the state average.¹²

Recent trends in disparities are heading in the wrong direction. The 2021 USDA Household Food Insecurity Report delivered good news overall but bad news in terms of equity. As a result of expanded government aid programs, overall household food insecurity rates in 2020 declined despite the economic upheaval caused by the pandemic. At the same time, higher-than-average food insecurity rates among Black households and households with children persisted and increased. Meanwhile, new data from the U.S. Census Bureau revealed that nationally, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adults are nearly twice as likely to live in food-insecure households.¹³

Evidence of worsening disparities amidst other progress highlights the need for a deep commitment to addressing equity gaps as we drive toward zero hunger. Many of the disparities we see can be traced directly to historic harm done to communities. That is why hunger rates are so much higher, for example, among Black and Indigenous Mainers. Maine's Plan to End Hunger by 2030 has been developed with prioritizing equity in mind. We have evaluated the goals, strategies, and initiatives using an equity framework,¹⁴ and we recommend ongoing evaluation of our progress towards reducing disparities. We have also identified where capacity building and investment are needed to monitor and evaluate equity in outcomes.

⁹ US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Food Security Supplement (2015-2017), Analysis by Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP)

¹⁰ Engelhard, E. & M. Hake (2020). [Food Security Evidence Review: Key Drivers and What Works To Improve Food Security. Available from Feeding America.](#)

¹¹ Myall, J. 2019. [Fact Sheet: Data on racial inequality shows need for solutions to advance racial justice.](#) (MECEP)

¹² Myall, J. 2019. [Issue Brief: Food Insecurity in Maine.](#) (MECEP).

¹³ [U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey. \(2021\)](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/racial-equity-impact-assessment-toolkit>

A CALL TO ACTION: THE CASE FOR ENDING HUNGER

"My mother was poor. My grandmother was poor. I didn't do too much better - not because I didn't have high hopes and big dreams, but just because of what I was able to access. Hopefully, my kids are going to be okay." - EH2030 contributor quoted in the [Impacted Community Review](#)

When we asked EH2030 contributors about what causes or exacerbates food insecurity in our communities, we heard the same challenges facing our economy: the decline of Maine's manufacturing and other sectors; a lack of affordable housing, especially near available jobs; and the need for higher wages. In many ways, the State's vision for ending hunger and its vision for creating a thriving economy with a place for everyone are deeply related. We cannot end hunger without growing wages. And we cannot grow the workforce without addressing the childcare, housing, and transportation issues that create the same barriers to opportunity that cause food insecurity.

The status quo of food insecurity comes at a great cost to Maine, socially and economically. Food insecurity is traumatic and harmful. It damages human potential, depriving people of not only food, but health and well-being, opportunity, and security. For many Mainers, the effects are generational and take an especially hard and long-lasting toll when experienced as a child. The 2019 Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment State Report noted that those experiencing food insecurity were more likely to have hypertension, coronary heart disease, hepatitis, stroke, cancer, asthma, diabetes, arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and kidney disease.¹⁵ That's in addition to documented behavioral and psychological health issues, delayed development in young children, and barriers to economic stability, employment, and educational achievement -- all contributing to the vicious cycle of poverty.¹⁶

As noted earlier, food insecurity extracts a \$709 million toll every year on Maine's economy even as we invest upward of \$305 million in public funds and \$64 million in private relief on short-term solutions. All told, that's a more than \$1 billion drag on our economy.

Tellingly, that cost is ten times greater than the total food budget shortfall reported by food-insecure households in Maine: \$105 million. That's just \$91 per month, on average, per household -- a cost far outweighed by the economic and social benefits, and cost savings of closing that income gap. When we invest in strategies that enable food security and economic opportunity, we invest in Maine's future.

¹⁵ <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/phdata/MaineCHNA/documents/2019-State-Report.pdf>

¹⁶ Feeding America, Impact of Hunger, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger>

[Graphic 7: The Cost of Food Insecurity to Maine, Compared to Household Food Budget Gap]

THE CASE FOR ENDING HUNGER

Total Annual Food Budget
Gap for Food Insecure
Households in Maine

\$105M

\$1 BILLION
Estimated Annual
Economic Cost of Food
Insecurity in Maine

MAINE'S STRATEGIC PLAN TO END HUNGER BY 2030

GOALS, STRATEGIES, INITIATIVES, & INVESTMENTS

Goal A: Build the Infrastructure & Capacity Necessary Within and Outside State Government to Coordinate Implementation of Maine's Plan to End Hunger

Eliminating hunger by 2030 in Maine requires all sectors of the state and many branches of state government to work in concert. Systems, safeguards, and supports are needed to guide and coordinate this cross-cutting work. Through clear reporting structures and data collection systems, Maine can measure its progress and ensure that critical targets are being met.

Strategy 1: Coordinate EH2030 work from the Governor's Office to support the cross-cutting and collaborative efforts necessary to end hunger.

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Fund and staff efforts to implement the EH2030 plan.
- Track and facilitate coordination among allied departmental and legislative initiatives.
- Strengthen relationships and align action across the governmental, educational, social services, philanthropic, and private sectors.

Strategy 2: Encourage, Stimulate, and Support Local and Regional Collaborative Efforts and Public-Private Partnerships to Meet and Address Meal Gap and Systemic Causes of Hunger

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Identify, promote, and support the scaling of effective local models and models successfully implemented elsewhere.
- Leverage the Maine Ending Hunger (VISTA) Corps to spur and coordinate the regional implementation of Ending Hunger 2030 initiatives and strategies.¹⁷
- Cooperate and coordinate with the philanthropic sector to align funding opportunities with plan objectives.

Strategy 3: Maintain an Advisory Committee to Guide Implementation of the State Plan to End Hunger, including Inclusion of Those with Lived Experience

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Issue an annual report on the state of hunger in Maine, progress made toward ending hunger, and progress made on implementing the strategic plan.

¹⁷ The Maine Ending Hunger Corps is a VISTA program administered by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry that currently places 23 VISTA members with host organizations, providing more than \$500,00 annually in staffing resources to help achieve the goals of this plan.

Strategy 4: Develop and Maintain Data Systems for Tracking Progress, Measuring Disparities, and Continuous Learning and Improvement

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Establish the capacity to disaggregate data on key outcomes for people and outcomes for systems to track and report on disparities at the county and municipal levels.
- Develop specific output, outcome, and impact indicators for each plan strategy.

Goal B: Ensure Consistent, Easy, & Equitable Access to Healthy & Culturally Appropriate Food

In order to end hunger in Maine, the first step is to ensure that all Maine residents have easy, consistent access to healthy and culturally appropriate food today. Federal nutrition programs, like SNAP, WIC, and the National School Lunch Program, are powerful, proven tools for addressing food insecurity. The challenge and opportunity for Maine is to maximize the utilization and impact of those federal dollars, especially in light of recent program expansions.

The charitable food system, meanwhile, does a heroic job keeping food flowing on the ground, directly to those who need it. Food banks, food pantries, school backpack programs, mutual-aid community food distributions—all overwhelmingly staffed by volunteers—have met the unprecedented demand of our moment with creativity, ingenuity, and caring. We can and should continue to augment these volunteer-supported efforts. At the same time, the charitable food system alone cannot end hunger today, and it takes more than just food to end hunger tomorrow. A strong and active role by state and federal governments and others as partners in this effort are essential to successfully ending hunger in Maine by 2030.

For those reasons, this goal is focused on investments that improve the accessibility and impact of food assistance programs through cross-sector coordination and support, and by strengthening our regional food system and supply chains. Given that for historical reasons specific communities are disproportionately impacted by hunger and food insecurity, our solutions must address and reduce those inequities as we ensure food security for all Maine residents. These communities include Black Mainers, including both New Americans and historically present Black Americans; Indigenous communities; all People of Color; individuals under the care of the State (e.g., individuals in the disabilities system, people in or recently exited from the corrections and foster care systems); female-headed households; LGBTQ residents, and those living in rural communities. As such, the more collectively supported, user-centered, accessible, and equitable our food assistance programs are, the more they contribute to pathways to economic and food security for all. Meanwhile, building the resilience of our regional food system safeguards nutrition security for Maine's future while contributing to the State's climate action and economic development goals.

Strategy 1: Maximize Federal Nutrition Programs & Child Nutrition Programs and Policies

[Plan in Action illustration E]

Proposed Initiatives & Investments:

- Use Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) for SNAP to raise the gross income threshold to 200 percent of the federal poverty level and remove asset limits.¹⁸
- Seek to maximize participation in federal nutrition programs including school nutrition programs, taking special care to foster initiatives and partnerships that address barriers to access and cultural relevance for disproportionately impacted communities.
- Advocate for nutrition program eligibility criteria and definitions of poverty that would encompass all Maine residents who are food insecure

[Plan in Action illustration F]

Strategy 2: Expand the Impact and Capacity of Food Assistance Programs through Cross-Sector Investment, Collaboration, & Coordination

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Continue to invest in charitable and community-based food assistance programs as a necessary complement to the inconsistent nature of philanthropic funding and to bolster capacity among providers to ensure the system can meet the need.
- Improve coordination and collaboration across charitable food programs, public programs addressing food and economic insecurity, and the health system.
- Align Invest in innovative public-private partnerships and strengthen existing programs that increase low-income access to local, healthy food.

Strategy 3: Transform Food Assistance Programs with an Increasingly User-Centered, Culturally Responsive, Low Barrier, and Equity-Driven Approach

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Expand opportunities for people using food assistance programs or impacted by hunger in program design and delivery to ensure programs benefit from the expertise of lived experience and meet the needs of the community.
- Encourage and support the capacity of food assistance providers to adopt best practice standards that maximize choice, quality, and dignity.
- Promote and invest in community-based initiatives in a variety of models (e.g., school-based pantries, mutual aid groups, etc.) to ensure barrier-free, culturally responsive access to food.

[Plan in Action illustration H]

- Build, expand, and strengthen relationships with organizations and community groups embedded in impacted communities. Emphasize relationships that will improve access for

¹⁸ Feeding America estimates that 43 percent of food insecure households in Maine have incomes above the current gross income threshold for SNAP in Maine, 185 percent FPL (2019). <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2019/overall/maine>

disproportionately impacted communities who are underserved by charitable and public food assistance programs.

[Plan in Action illustration I]

- Expand mobile and home delivery access models in communities to serve those that are homebound or have transportation barriers.
- Integrate complementary services and supports (i.e. connections to public assistance programs, food, and otherwise) with food assistance programs, and co-locate food access points at locations providing other community and public services.
- Expand use of technology to enable solutions such as ordering ahead, scheduling appointments, and other applications that allow for more efficient, private food access.
- Develop better data sharing models to measure the extent to which programs are meeting the needs of all populations.

Strategy 4: Improve Nutrition Security by Supporting and Sustaining a Diverse, Local, and Robust Food Supply System in Maine¹⁹

Proposed Initiatives and Investments :

- Invest in and strengthen Maine’s food infrastructure—from farmland and working waterfront protection to processing capacity to distribution networks—to ensure that Maine-grown and produced, healthy food is abundant and available for all.²⁰
- Leverage USDA-supported programs (Maine Harvest Bucks, Farm Fresh Rewards, Maine Senior Farm Share, WIC FMNP, Farm-to-School, etc.) to maximize the use of local foods in nutrition security programs, particularly those that empower people with the ability to make choices about what types of food they consume.
- Include all workers—including food supply chain workers—in wage and workplace protections to prevent food insecurity among food system workers.
- Invest in farm, fishery, and food-related businesses as a means for creating living-wage jobs, enabling access to culturally appropriate foods, and contributing to thriving local economies, emphasizing investment in socially disadvantaged producers to address historical inequities.
- Expand food rescue and gleaning programs that collect quality food that would otherwise go to waste and redistribute it to food security and other community-based organizations.
- Promote personal and regional food self-provisioning and self-sufficiency by protecting and restoring farmland and fisheries.

¹⁹ The New England Food Vision has called for 50% of New England’s food to be produced in the region by 2060. <https://foodsolutionsne.org/a-new-england-food-vision/>

²⁰ This also aligns with the Maine Won’t Wait Climate Action Plan which advocates that by 2030, 30% of the food Maine people eat will come from Maine https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf

Goal C: Promote, Bolster, & Enable Economic Security and Opportunity for All Maine Households

Ending hunger and ensuring food security means that people in Maine have the resources they need to prevent the difficult tradeoffs caused by economic insecurity and that result in food insecurity. At the same time, too many people encounter barriers to economic security and opportunity in the Maine economy or through safety net programs. As noted throughout, these barriers are not experienced equally across Maine communities; strategies that do not explicitly address these disparities are highly likely to leave them in place.

The existing public benefits system is burdensome and often insufficient. As noted in the August 2021 DHHS Lift Report on Measures of Economic Security,²¹ significant efforts are underway to streamline, strengthen, and simplify Maine’s public benefits system. In fact, many of the challenges identified during the EH2030 process have been addressed or are targeted for improvement under existing plans. However, and as was also noted in that report and the 2020 LIFT Working Group Report, to keep Maine families out of food insecurity, more work needs to be done. For example, insufficient access to quality, affordable childcare has repeatedly been found to be a barrier keeping heads of households—especially women—out of the workforce or out of higher-paying workforce opportunities. Similarly, high costs of housing, transportation, and healthcare and/or health insurance undermine household financial stability—and thus food security.

Economic security goes far beyond simply being employed. Not all jobs are created equal, nor are the infrastructures and local economic conditions the same. Investing in supportive infrastructure, as recommended in the Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029,²² reflects the interconnected and mutually reinforcing systems²³ that can help eliminate these barriers so that all Maine residents can thrive.

*Maine is making policy advances—progress that was accelerated by pandemic-related funding for programs and by a pandemic-necessitated willingness to offer flexibility and innovation around how programming is accessed and delivered. **Many of these advances are measurably reducing poverty and hunger.** It will be crucial to ensure that this progress is safeguarded and institutionalized even after the pandemic subsides.*

²¹ <http://legislature.maine.gov/doc/6990>

²² https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov/decd/files/inline-files/DECD_120919_sm.pdf

²³ The State economic development plan identifies supportive infrastructure as (transportation, housing, health care, early care and education/out of school time programs, and PK-16 education)

Strategy 1: Align Efforts with the 2020-2029 Maine Economic Development Plan and other State initiatives²⁴ to Create a Diverse, Inclusive, and Sustainable Economy Where All People of Maine have Access to Good Paying Jobs and the Opportunity to Thrive

[Plan in Action illustration B]

Proposed Initiatives and Investments

- Raise minimum wage to a thriving wage.
- As stated in the Maine Economic Development Plan and Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, continue to ensure that equity is prioritized in Maine’s economic growth.²⁵ For example, ensure that investments in entrepreneurship and workforce development reach Maine people from historically underrepresented backgrounds.
- Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in Maine’s workforce, including additional training, increased flexibility regarding foreign credentials, etc.
- Support Department of Labor efforts to increase apprenticeship and industry partnership. Emphasize those activities (embedded coaching, evaluation, and reporting) demonstrated to support the hiring, retention, and advancement of workers from historically marginalized communities.
- Expand education and training programs with a focus on whole-family approaches²⁶ that prepare/reskill people for higher-wage jobs and foster economic stability.
- Encourage employer policies and practices that enhance employment stability and opportunity, such as paid family leave; catastrophic leave pools; emergency assistance funds; and more.
- Support efforts to make broadband internet access universally accessible and available to all Maine people regardless of where they live.

Strategy 2: Put Maine People at the Center of the Public Benefits System and Align the System’s Redesign and Stabilization with the 2020 LIFT Working Group Report²⁷ and 2021 LIFT Report on Measures of Economic Security

[Plan in Action illustration A]

Proposed Initiatives and Investments :

- Include people accessing the public benefits system or impacted by poverty in program design to ensure programs gain from the expertise of lived experience and meet community needs.
- Assess gaps in federal assistance programs and explore how to best meet them through the allocation of state and local resources.

[Plan in Action illustration G]

²⁴ Includes Department of Labor initiatives

²⁵ <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/sites/maine.gov.covid19/files/inline-files/MaineJobs%26RecoveryPlan.pdf>

²⁶ The fundamental goal of two-generation work is to build family well-being by intentionally working with children and the adults in their lives simultaneously.

²⁷ <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Reduce%20Child%20Poverty%20by%20Leveraging%20Investments%20so%20Families%20Can%20Thrive%20%28LD%201774%29%20--%20Cover%20Letter%20and%20Report%209-2020.pdf>

- Coordinate and invest in the establishment of a secure, user-centered, single point of enrollment for state and federal benefits programs. Examples of current or contemplated related or building-block efforts include:
 - Expansion of My Maine Connection.
 - Expansion of the Department of Labor’s online portal.
 - Expanded use of navigators across benefits programs.
- Ensure cross-enrollment for programs for which public benefits recipients are likely eligible (e.g., tax credits, LIHEAP, TANF, WIC).
- Leverage and enhance existing benefit programs to provide basic income security.
- Explore innovative models, such as Employment First²⁸ that provide adequate income supports and employment opportunities for the most vulnerable, including individuals with disabilities and behavioral health disorders, youth exiting foster care, and previously incarcerated people.
- Continue to review and revise policies for benefits to expand eligibility, increase transparency, and remove cliffs and penalties to make it easier to get and keep needed benefits.
- Continue to review and implement criminal justice reforms that would minimize food insecurity among families of incarcerated or previously incarcerated people.²⁹
- Explore opportunities to support wealth building, such as ABLE Accounts.³⁰

Strategy 3: **Align Efforts with MaineDOT’s Impending 2022 Statewide Strategic Transit Plan and Community-Based Transit Plans to Ensure that Transportation is Accessible, Available, and Affordable for All to Connect People to Jobs, Opportunities, and Resources**

[Plan in Action illustration C]

Proposed Initiatives and Investments

- Support MaineDOT efforts to develop an innovative, efficient, effective, accessible system that people around the state can use easily and choose to use. Invest in the expansion of bus lines and other forms of transportation and increase the frequency of service in both urban and areas.
- Encourage cities and towns to adopt sustainable community design principles (i.e., walkable and bikeable cities, creating Transit-Oriented Development plans, ensuring complete streets, and protecting open spaces).
- Reduce barriers to private transportation including the expansion of transitional transportation services to unemployed or low-income families, making driver’s education and licenses more affordable, expanding the use of GO MAINE,³¹ and ensuring that historically marginalized communities have equitable access to these programs and resources.

²⁸ <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads/providers/employment-services>

²⁹ This NIH study [A Pilot Study Examining Food Insecurity and HIV Risk Behaviors among Individuals Recently Released from Prison](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3733343/) found that 91% of incarcerated people returning to the community qualified as food insecure <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3733343/>

³⁰ <https://www.ablenrc.org/state-review/maine>

³¹ <https://www.gomaine.org/>

Strategy 4: Reduce Housing Instability

[Plan in Action illustration M]

Proposed Initiatives and Investments

- Maximize the use of all available mechanisms (including federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and State investments) to expand incentives for affordable housing development.
- Encourage and incentivize municipalities to reduce zoning and other barriers to the development of affordable housing and the conversion of existing buildings into affordable housing.
- Encourage and advocate for programs and policies that support affordable homeownership and that enable people receiving public assistance to remain in their own homes. Examples of this include Maine Housing's Community Aging in Place initiative and Maine's successful implementation of Home and Community Based Waivers for those receiving Medicaid.
- Increase access to housing vouchers and reduce barriers, exclusionary criteria, and sanctions for individuals using these vouchers.

Strategy 5: Make Healthcare Affordable and Accessible for All

Proposed Initiatives and Investments

- Increase the affordability of health insurance and the options available to obtain affordable health insurance as is being done via current ARPA investments.
- Leverage healthcare and health insurance systems to screen for, measure, and address food insecurity and those factors that drive it.
- Close insurance gaps around behavioral health, dental health, and other coverages, the absence of which can drive household expenses, limit work opportunities, or both.
- Restore the capacity of Maine's public health infrastructure.

Strategy 6: Align Efforts with the Overarching Goals of the Children's Cabinet³² and the Recommendations of the Economic Recovery Committee³³ to Strengthen the State's Early Care and Education System.

Proposed Initiatives and Investments

- Increase access to affordable early care and education, preventive and early intervention services for young children and their families.
 - Support expansion of Head Start programs
- Raise the quality of our early care and education system and support families to access quality programming.
- Recruit, prepare, and retain a diverse early childhood workforce.

³² https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/GOPIF_CC_PlanYoungChildren.pdf

³³ https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/Maine%20ERC%20Report_FINAL_11242020.pdf

- Build a skilled early childhood education workforce to prepare children for lifelong academic and career success; partner with Children’s Cabinet and DOL efforts to examine policy options for the state and federal government to better support the early childhood education workforce with salary supplements, stipends, or other forms of compensation to provide opportunities to build career pathways with higher wage opportunities.
- Evaluate and address the current workforce and business model challenges that impede the growth and expansion of childcare programs in our communities
- Adequately fund childcare programs and benefits and adjust eligibility and copayment requirements to ensure that childcare and out of school time programs are affordable and accessible for all families who need it

Strategy 7: Ensure Educational Success for All Students from Pre-Kindergarten Through Post-Secondary

Proposed Initiatives and Investments

- Promote post-secondary opportunities for all Maine residents at the vocational, community college, and university levels that support attainment of a post-secondary degree or other recognized credential of value that leads to high-growth jobs. This includes apprenticeships and other credentialing pathways.
- Explore new initiatives to ensure post-secondary program affordability and reduce student debt
- Increase high school and post-secondary graduation rates paying special attention to disparate outcomes for students of color and other populations disproportionately impacted by food insecurity.
- Align efforts with workplace development efforts and expand paid internship and apprenticeship opportunities
- Ensure that educational efforts throughout the state enhance the quality of living and enable citizens to live a life of value
 - Expand and maximize access to programs that support the entrance of those with low incomes to higher education
 - Strengthen linkages between educational institutions and employers to identify workforce development needs and public/private partnerships to meet those needs
 - Think holistically about the overall economic well-being of college students and the other challenges they face, including tuition, debt, and housing.

Goal D: Change the Narrative of Food Insecurity to Focus on Collective Responsibility & Amplify the Voices of Impacted People

Poverty and hunger in our communities are the result of systemic failures and structural inequities. Yet in the public conversation about hunger and poverty, one tends to hear a lot about what people who are poor should be doing differently and less about how the systems that create poverty can and must be reformed. Changing the narrative about food insecurity means shifting the focus from individual blame to

an understanding of the historic, social, and economic forces which create and perpetuate poverty—and thus food insecurity.

[Plan in Action illustration O]

Strategy 1: Reframe Hunger and Food Insecurity and their Costs as a Collective Responsibility to Be Addressed with Urgency and Ones That Impact All Maine People

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Develop and implement a human-centered public awareness campaign regarding Maine’s Plan to End Hunger by 2030 and what is required of us to end hunger in Maine by 2030
 - Emphasize the systemic drivers of hunger and poverty
 - Emphasize the economic and social costs--not just to people who poor and hungry--for allowing hunger to persist
- Spotlight policy innovations and other successes that are reducing hunger and food insecurity.

Strategy 2: Empower and Invest in the Leadership & Inclusion of Impacted People

[Plan in Action illustrations D and L]

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Build capacity to support individuals with lived experience to take on leadership roles within public and private initiatives addressing hunger and poverty.³⁴
- Create or expand tools, resources, and initiatives focused on building the capacity of nonprofit and governmental entities to collaborate across experience, lived and otherwise by:
 - Creating safe and inclusive spaces for collaboration and engagement.³⁵
 - Building and strengthening relationships with organizations and groups embedded in impacted communities.

Strategy 3: Enlist the Private Sector as Full Partners in the Maine’s Plan to End Hunger by 2030

[Plan in Action illustration N]

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Develop a private-sector tool kit of policies and practices to address and eliminate hunger and food insecurity in the workforce.
- Engage area chambers of commerce and private industry associations to identify areas of common concern and opportunity.
- Support partnerships with private employers and the public and social sectors to augment efforts to have Maine employers become “employers of choice” by investing in practices such as:
 - family-sustaining wages and benefits,
 - necessary on-the-job training that leads to advancement,
 - mentorship and interpersonal supports, and

³⁴ This was included in the 2020 LIFT Working Group Recommendations.

³⁵ <https://results4america.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Tokenization-Handout-and-Worksheet.pdf>

- a fair, safe, and inclusive workplace environment.

Goal E: Close the Equity Gap in Household Food Security by Addressing Underlying Structural Inequities in all Ending Hunger 2030 Goals

In Maine, the prevalence and severity of hunger and food insecurity differ across geography and across household characteristics like race and ethnicity, parental status and occupation. Some segments of our population experience food insecurity at a rate 2-4 times higher than the state average. To eliminate hunger in Maine, we need to address the underlying cultural and structural inequities that drive disparities in household food security.

Strategy 1: Apply an Equity Test to EH2030 Implementation

[Plan in Action illustration K]

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- In plan implementation, continue to apply equity tools and screens (such as those proposed in the 2020 Recommendations to the Legislature from The Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations³⁶) to ensure disparities are being reduced.
- Partner with and leverage existing public, private, and community-based efforts to promote equity, including:
 - Bureau of Rehabilitative Services programs to support individuals with disabilities including progressive employment, benefits counseling, and independent living services
 - Apprenticeship in partnership with the Department of Corrections for people involved in the criminal justice system
 - Current work those in recovery to peer support workers, training, and employment opportunities
 - Future aligned recommendations from the Permanent Commission

Strategy 2: Prioritize disproportionately impacted communities in pilot programs and include impacted voices in the design and leadership of pilots to ensure disparities are addressed as a priority

[Plan in Action illustration J]

Proposed Initiatives and Investments:

- Invest in the design, implementation, and analysis of new strategies and pilot programs intended to support disproportionately impacted communities and which are led by or incorporate input from communities impacted by hunger and food insecurity.

³⁶ https://www.maine.gov/labor/pcrit/reports/2020_LegReport.pdf, p. 29-32,

[The Plan in Action Illustrations to be Sprinkled Throughout]

[explanatory copy for somewhere--TOC page? Perhaps the PiAs are on the ToC?]

Everyone at the Table: Maine's Plan to End Hunger by 2030 is intended to provide strategic direction for the State's ending hunger initiative; it is not an implementation plan detailing every action that should be taken and by whom. We recognize that that may make it difficult for some to envision how the recommended strategies will look on the ground. To help, we've included X examples throughout the plan labeled "The Plan in Action." These are examples taken from Maine or elsewhere that are representative of the kinds of initiatives that embody the principles of the plan.

A: The Plan In Action: Expanding the Safety Net Improves Lives and Redresses Inequity

In Maine, the number of families struggling with child hunger decreased by 6% when monthly payments from the Child Tax Credit program began in July 2021. The expanded child tax credit, which was passed as part of the COVID-19 relief package, resulted in children from the lowest-income households being eligible for the full credit for the first time. While families in all racial and ethnic groups have seen drops in child hunger following the expansion of the tax credit, the gains are especially notable in the Black and Latino communities, where "food hardship rates" are about double that of white people, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

<https://mainebeacon.com/child-tax-credit-already-helping-maine-families-as-congress-debates-making-it-permanent/>

B: The Plan in Action: Equity in Economic Development and Recovery Expands Economic Opportunity

"Everyone at the Table" calls for economic development efforts to explicitly support groups disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. The Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan has allocated \$3 million for encouraging business diversity. Encouraging and supporting business owners from underrepresented backgrounds will enhance Maine's business diversity, create new investment opportunities, and connect these business owners to further financing options through federal programs. These funds will support technical assistance, outreach, training, marketing, and access-to-capital programs for business owners from underrepresented backgrounds, build upon successful support programs to scale them more broadly, and explore how the State could encourage business diversity through its own procurement.

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/maine-jobs-and-recovery-plan>

C: The Plan in Action: Workforce Transportation Investment Connect People to Opportunity

"Everyone at the Table" notes that transportation is frequently a barrier to getting or keeping thriving-wage employment. As recommended by *Maine Won't Wait*, the State's four-year plan for climate action, the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan has allocated \$5 million to launch a workforce transportation pilot program. Expanding access to reliable transportation to connect workers to employment opportunities supports economic security and workforce development, especially in rural areas where transportation options are limited. This funding, as competitive grants from the Department of

Transportation, will support Workforce Transportation Pilot Projects to connect workers and employers and create community and economic benefits with funding for small buses and vans, as well as program start-up costs.

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/maine-jobs-and-recovery-plan>

D: The Plan in Action: Engaging Impacted People in Program Design and Implementation Improves Impact

Inspired, in part, by the work of national poverty expert Dr. Donna Beegle and multiple trainings she has led in Washington County, the Community Caring Collaborative (CCC) supports direct work to address poverty at multiple levels. CCC poverty initiatives, as a whole, are designed to increase awareness, change practice and policies, create necessary supports, and remove barriers for community members impacted by poverty. Neighbor Group is a group of community members currently living in poverty who support each other through sharing resources, organizing guest speakers, and providing input to the CCC about developing and incubating programs.

<https://www.cccmaine.org/about-us/poverty-groups/>

E: The Plan in Action: Scaling Benefits to Match Economic Realities is Critical

On October 1, 2021, Maine residents who qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program got a boost in their buying power. The US Department of Agriculture has announced a 21% permanent increase to the program after re-evaluating the cost of healthy meals. It took into account convenience foods, like pre-cooked canned beans and pre-cut salads, chopped frozen vegetables, and pre-cut salads have been added to help increase nutrition values for each meal.

<https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/outreach/feed-maine/snap-benefits-to-increase-for-mainers-in-october-heres-what-you-need-to-know-feed-maine/97-0e473830-d83c-46b0-ba04-18190b8037f2>

F: The Plan in Action: Universal School Meals Lowers Barriers to Child Nutrition

The federal government made breakfast and lunch free for all students during the coronavirus pandemic, and Maine will continue to offer free meals at least through 2023. The effort has highlighted the importance of providing meals to all students, not just those who meet income eligibility requirements.

Making school meals free for all students dramatically improves access to healthy food for thousands of Maine children. According to the Maine Department of Education, about 38 percent, or 65,000 students, are currently eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

<https://www.pressherald.com/2021/07/11/maine-among-first-states-to-make-school-meals-free-for-all-students/>

G: The Plan in Action: Integrating Benefits Humanizes the Safety Net

Getting and keeping the benefits for which one is eligible can itself be a full-time job--one that can be dehumanizing and dispiriting. The State of Minnesota tried to tackle that by creating MNBenefits.mn.gov, an easy-to-use, all-in-one application for safety-net benefits like SNAP, childcare assistance, housing support, and flexible cash. Minnesota residents can now apply for nine different benefits programs through the integrated site, reducing the average time it takes to apply for benefits from 110 minutes to less than 20 minutes, with positive outcomes for clients and caseworkers.

www.MNBenefits.mn.gov

H: The Plan in Action: Grassroots Mutual Aid Models Ensure Stigma-Free and Culturally Appropriate Food

When the COVID-19 pandemic first arrived, organizers with Presenté! Maine were quick to recognize the crisis' impending impacts on Latinx communities, people of color, and poor people across the state. Just days after the first COVID case was recorded in the state, Presenté launched the Food Brigade, a mutual-aid project that delivers weekly food rations to people in need. Since its first week of operation, during which rations were distributed to 50 people, the Food Brigade's capacity has grown massively: every week, the project now delivers 15,000 pounds of food to 2,200 people in Portland, Lewiston and surrounding towns.

<https://mainebeacon.com/food-from-people-to-people-mutual-aid-program-feeds-thousands-with-barrier-free-aid/>

<https://www.facebook.com/presentemaine>

I: The Plan in Action: Sharing Power by Sharing Resources

Recognizing that community-led and community-based organizations are often better situated to provide aid (including culturally appropriate food), the Good Shepherd Food Bank launched its Community Redistribution Fund. GSFB regrants money it has raised to organizations led by or working closely with BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities. Use of grant funds can include but is not limited to: the purchase of food for direct distribution or meal preparation; gift cards/credits to culturally specific markets for community members; food sovereignty projects; farming/agriculture projects; transportation; storage; and distribution costs. Awards are available for up to \$10,000

<https://www.gsfb.org/crf/>

J: The Plan in Action: Land Access for Socially Disadvantaged and Underserved Farmers is Essential

The history of land access and displacement is a fraught and traumatic one for non-white Americans--not least for Black and indigenous farmers. Liberation Farms in Wales, Maine is one small but significant step in healing some of that history. Liberation Farms, the Community Farming Program of the Somali Bantu Community Association, provides Somali Bantu families struggling with food insecurity with the tools and resources to grow healthy, culturally-appropriate foods for themselves and their community

by securing land and providing access to seeds, training, technical assistance, and marketing. It demonstrates what's possible when marginalized communities have the opportunity to organize and lead themselves.

<https://somalibantumaine.org/liberation-farms/>

K: The Plan in Action: Seeing Disparate Impacts is a Key Step in Addressing Them

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services recently established the [Office of Population Health Equity \(OPHE\)](#) within the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) in order to identify and address health disparities in communities throughout Maine. The OPHE is focusing on data-driven interventions to advance health equity for a number of populations, including but not limited to racial and ethnic populations, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and other groups for which disparate health outcomes—and, not coincidentally, disparate food security outcomes—are present in Maine.

L: The Plan in Action: Changing the Narrator Helps Change the Narrative

“Nothing about us without us” is a rallying cry of democracy going back to the 16th Century. Yet too often, public policies are crafted without the input of people who will be most impacted. Including impacted people was a priority identified in EH2030's 2019 Interim Report. In early 2021, Resources for Social Change (ROSC) was asked to invite people with lived and living experiences of poverty and hunger could weigh in on the policy recommendations made in the Interim Report. This process resulted in the publication of a 32-page report that offered testimonies describing lived experiences of poverty and hunger, feedback on Interim Report recommendations, and community-generated solutions for addressing the root causes of hunger, poverty, and social inequities. Participants continued their engagement in the State's planning efforts to end hunger by 2030 as active members of regional teams that identified assets, opportunities, and a vision for what food secure communities would look like in their region of Maine.

<https://www.resourcesforsocialchange.org/home/ehm2030-impacted-community-project>

M: The Plan in Action: Thoughtful Policy Adjustments Can Reduce Housing Instability

Having a disability too often leads to food insecurity, and housing insecurity exacerbates food insecurity. How disability assistance is funded and structured can worsen food insecurity because it can force people to choose between receiving the services they need or remaining in their homes. Maine has sought and received Home and Community Based Waivers to redress this policy flaw. Thanks to these waivers, MaineCare can cover life-saving and life-enhancing services for people with disabilities and their care givers while allowing people to remain in the homes and communities that can support them best.

N: The Plan in Action: Employment Policies Can Stabilize Families

According to the Federal Reserve Bank, more than one-fourth of American adults are just one \$400 financial setback away from being unable to pay their monthly bills.³⁷ A setback could be a car repair, a hot water tank leak, an illness in a family member, or any number of unexpected expenses. With no savings or buffer, these setbacks can precipitate a food-security crisis, forcing people to choose between eating or dealing with the emergency. An Employee Relief Fund (also called an Employee Assistance Fund) is something employers can establish to help employees cope with unexpected hardships so these setbacks don't place undue financial stress on them and their families. The availability of such a fund also helps position human resource departments as navigators to connect employees with other available resources available inside and outside their organizations. The Maine Credit Union League is one employer who created such a fund. They estimate that seventy-five times since its inception, the fund has prevented financial shocks experienced by team members from snowballing into more dire emergencies.

O: The Plan in Action: Reframing the Conversation Can Inspire Change

Powerful historic and economic forces--not individual choices and behaviors--create poverty. That's what the data tells us. Our cultural narratives, however, tend to insist otherwise--that impoverished people and communities are generally the causes for their own conditions. In public conversations, those narratives exert significant (if sometimes invisible) power, obscuring or complicating the policy pathways that could actually solve the problem. But how do you change a cultural narrative? Food Solutions New England at the University of New Hampshire is one entity doing groundbreaking work on narrative strategy.³⁸ Their efforts grow from a place of recognizing that worldviews, underlying beliefs ("mental models"), and understandings about how the world works now and in the future are key leverage areas for transformation. Their work illustrates how narratives have – and can shift – power.

³⁷<https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2021-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2020-dealing-with-unexpected-expenses.htm>

³⁸ <https://foodsolutionsne.org/narrative-strategy/>

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Visual Design:

[note to Lorena et al.: Insert alphabetical list of names from all three phases--Interim Report, Community Review, and Fio. Then separate alpha list of orgs/bureaus/businesses/etc. Spreadsheet with All Participants (from all 3 phases) & All Organizations ([first tab "Report List"](#)).]

Materials Informing the Development of the Plan :

The plan was informed by EH2030 process content, an extensive review of national evidence-based and local food insecurity research and reports, and aligned with existing State plans and initiatives.

Process Content:

- [Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030: Interim Report to the Legislature](#)
- Resources for Organizing and Social Change: [Impacted Community Recommendations and Review on the Interim Report for Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030](#)
- Regional Narratives from EH2030 Phase III ([text and audio versions](#))
- What We Heard in Phase III (Appendix 2)

State Plans, Reports, & Initiatives:

- [Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029, a Focus on Talent and Innovation](#)
- [Governor's Economic Recovery Committee Economic Support and Stabilization Recommendations](#)
- [Maine Won't Wait, A Four-Year Plan for Climate Action](#)
- [Maine Children's Cabinet: A Plan for Young Children](#)
- [DHHS 2020 Lift Working Group Report: Reduce Child Poverty by Leveraging Investments So Families Can Thrive](#)
- [DHHS 2021 LIFT Report on Measures of Child and Family Economic Security for Families Participating in Maine's Public Assistance Programs](#)

- [Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations: Recommendations to the Legislature \(September 2020\)](#)
- [The New England Food Vision](#)
- [Transit Tomorrow: The Long-Range Public Transportation Plan for Greater Portland, Maine \(2020-2050\)](#)
- [Maine Department of Labor Workforce Strategy](#)

APPENDIX 1 - OUR PROCESS

APPENDIX 2 - WHAT WE HEARD: THE CONVERSATIONS THAT DROVE THE DESIGN OF THE PLAN

APPENDIX 3 - RECOMMENDED METRICS FOR AN ACCOUNTABILITY & IMPACT DASHBOARD